DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 530 IR 019 154

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TITLE Faculty Issues Pertaining to Institutional Support and Reward Practices in Distance Education.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Compensation (Remuneration); Copyrights; *Distance Education; Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Instructional Innovation; Motivation; Participation; Program Development; *Rewards

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of eight issues that are central to the discussion of distance education and its relationship to institutional support and reward systems. Each section provides a brief description of the issue and a summary of what is currently known about reward practices and policies in distance education. The issues discussed are: participation; motivation; workload; compensation; incentives; rewards; recognition; copyright; and intellectual property. The paper concludes that institutions should work to: (1) identify and provide a wider range of incentives that can lead to greater satisfaction and job performance among faculty involved in classroom innovations and outreach activities; (2) reduce barriers, both real and perceived, that many hinder participation in activities that promote the values and goals of both the institution and the academic unit; (3) create faculty development programs that provide incentives and rewards which appeal to intrinsic motives, accommodate different career paths, and match developmental stages of motivation; (4) provide instructional support programs; (5) develop criteria to equitable determine flexible workloads and adequate compensation for outreach teaching and alternative modes of instructional delivery; (6) align rewards with institutional values and priorities so that rewards reflect role expectations and faculty contributions to all facets of the institution's mission are valued and appropriately credited; and (7) establish copyright policies that accommodate changing patterns in information access and dissemination and that protect both institutional interests and the intellectual property of faculty. (AEF)

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ED 419 530

Faculty Issues Pertaining to Institutional Support and Reward Practices in Distance Education

Presented at the annual meeting of
the American Educational Research Association
San Diego, CA
April 13-17, 1998

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Some have argued --I among them--that distance learning will be the instrument of change that will focus and push forward many of the developments in faculty work and roles (Plater, 1995).

Introduction

The work of faculty is changing. For the past decade, there has been increased discussion about productivity, the nature of scholarship, and reform of the tenure and promotion system. The pervasion of information technology has contributed new fuel to fire the debate as distance education, computer-mediated communications, and electronic publishing alter the traditional ways in which faculty have interacted with students, and accessed and disseminated information. Coupled with technological advances, forces such as a changing student population and economic demands have given rise to "virtual" universities and customer-oriented approaches within the academy. In response to these influences, faculty expectations and roles and, indeed, the university itself are facing significant change.

Traditional reward systems do not necessarily accommodate the newer dimensions of today's faculty role. Though rewards should reflect current institutional values and role expectations, reward practices lag behind the reality of faculty work in the evolving university. Many in distance education, in particular, are asking important questions about faculty incentives, compensation, and workload; training and technical support; and intellectual property rights. Higher education institutions, however, are just beginning to address policy development with respect to technological innovations such as distance education. To date, there is little policy and even less research to inform decision-making.

This paper presents an overview of eight issues that are central to the discussion of distance education and its relationship to institutional support and reward systems. The intent is to provide a context for understanding the topics such as motivation, rewards, and incentives. Each section provides a brief description of the issue and a

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summary of what we currently know about reward practices and policies in distance education.

Participation

Until recently, participation in innovations such as distance education have been voluntary on the part of faculty. Faculty could be enticed by (and often sought) opportunities to earn extra compensation by teaching outreach courses. Now, as distance education and teaching with technology have become more prevalent within the mainstream of higher education, participation in off-campus teaching and alternatively delivered instruction is more frequently expected as a function of the faculty role.

Why do faculty participate in distance education? Contrary to what one might think, faculty are not in it for the money. Studies (Jackson, 1994; Taylor & White, 1991; Wolcott, 1998) have shown that faculty have been attracted to teaching in distance education programs for a variety of reasons which are principally intrinsic and, often, altruistic. For example, faculty typically get involved in distance education to have the chance to increase access for and interact with a different population of students such as working adults or geographically isolated students; to work with new technologies; for the novelty of the experience; or to extend the influence of their instructional program. On the other hand, the literature identifies policy and attitudinal barriers (Bolduc, 1993; Clark, 1993; Dillon, 1989; Gunawardena, 1992; Parer, Croker & Shaw, 1988). Faculty have been deterred from participating in distance education because of concerns about the quality of the instructional experience, the absence of incentives, inadequate compensation, and concerns about workload and the lack of recognition for distance teaching in the promotion and tenure processes.

Motivation

As noted above, faculty have participated in distance education more from intrinsic than extrinsic motivation. For most faculty, the prospect of some monetary reward is not at the root of their motivation, rather faculty are motivated to satisfy professional goals such as increasing their exposure with off-campus clientele and obtaining consulting contracts with industry; and for personal reasons such as the satisfaction gained from working with a new technology, interacting with practitioners in their field, or in providing educational access to an under-served student population (Wolcott, 1998). As theories of work motivation suggest, satisfaction is often its own reward and enough to motivate performance. Intrinsic factors may have stronger appeal than extrinsic incentives offered by the institution.

According to Lonsdale (1993), however, institutions of higher education focus on extrinsic rewards as a source of motivation. Rather than appealing to the things that faculty find personally rewarding, institutions tend to rely on external factors such as monetary compensation when, in reality, faculty may be far more motivated by receiving a new piece of computer equipment or earning some public acknowledgment for their service.

Another dimension of motivation that is often not taken into account is the fact that patterns of motivation change as a faculty member progresses through his/her career. What motivates a junior faculty member striving toward tenure will not necessarily prove motivating for a more senior member. As a case in point, Wolcott (1998) relates that a

small stipend was an inconsequential inducement for one veteran professor compared to the prestige and satisfaction derived from developing a funded and nationally distributed telecourse on the subject of his life's pursuit.

Workload

One's teaching load is a major issue for faculty. A truism of distance teaching is that it consumes more time than a traditionally-taught, campus-based course. Faculty who have taught at a distance attest to the amount of effort and time it takes to prepare distance education courses and to address the needs and concerns of often large and widely dispersed groups of students. Asynchronous courses, for example, place a high demand on individualized feedback. The time-consuming nature of distance education is not always recognized by administrators in assigning faculty workloads.

An activity closely associated with extension and outreach, distance teaching is frequently considered an over-load assignment in which case it typically carries an additional stipend. Though compensated for the extra course, faculty often report that the amount received does not adequately compensate for the time invested. As various forms of distance and distributed education become more commonplace, distance courses may be attached to role assignments and completed as part of the regular workload. For the present, institutions exhibit wide variation in how they treat distance teaching assignments. Some programs provide credit and a half, double credit, or release time in exchange for teaching a distance education course.

There is a larger issue beyond that of equity in compensation. As Olcott and Wright (1995) note, how institutions deal with issues of release time and teaching load conveys values and priorities of the institution. These, in turn, influence which activities count in tenure and promotion determinations. Faculty are concerned about equitable consideration in annual reviews and promotion and tenure decisions for so time-consuming an activity as distance teaching. As Wolcott (1997) learned, faculty and administrators, alike, weigh the costs of engaging in distance teaching at the expense of more highly valued activities such as research and scholarly publication.

Compensation

Scott (1984) described a tradition of poor compensation in continuing education; likewise Fairweather (1993) documented the lowest salaries among those faculty with the greatest participation in public-service activities. Distance education, which is closely associated with extension activities, shares a similar heritage of poor financial rewards. Among institutions, there is no standardization in the amount or type of compensation for distance teaching faculty. Wolcott and Haderlie (1995), for example, found that compensation practices for distance education varied widely among institutions in the western states. Similarly, the results of an informal survey posted on a popular distance education discussion list (McPhillips, May 9, 1997), reported a wide range in dollar amounts and methods for determining payment.

At issue, is not necessarily that faculty should be compensated more for distance teaching, but that the compensation should be equitable in relation to the amount of time and effort invested, and equivalent with more traditional forms of teaching. Practices of providing extra compensation for distance teaching conflict with institutional policies against supplemental pay at some universities (Wolcott, 1998). Although distance

education faculty have not been highly motivated by monetary incentives, Clark (1993) found that the lack of perceived equitable compensation was a disincentive for participation. Inequities in compensation can hamper recruitment and retention of faculty in distance education programs.

Incentives

In lieu of monetary compensation, some institutions offer other inducements to participate in distance education. Wolcott and Haderlie (1995), and Wolcott (1998) identified such incentives including: release time for preparation and course development; funding to support the development of instructional materials; the purchase computers for individual faculty use; and supplemental travel funds. Consistent with faculty motivations, these alternatives that may be valued more than financial remuneration and, as a result, have greater power to promote participation in distance education programs. At one institution, the receipt of a roving parking permit was a significant perquisite.

Less tangible incentives are offered in the form of technical and instructional support, and training. Providing a teaching assistant is an incentive common in many programs. Additionally, the services of graphic artists and instructional designers to assist in course design and the production of instructional materials are enticements for the apprehensive instructor. Training can serve as both an incentive and an essential institutional support in preparing faculty in the use of new technologies and in the application of techniques for effective distance teaching and learning. Of the 1200 institutions represented in the National Center for Education Statistics survey, *Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions* (Lewis, Alexander, Farris & Greene, 1997), training in the use of technologies, curriculum development, teaching methods for distance education, and consultation with support staff were required by approximately a quarter of the institutions.

Rewards

Rewards can be categorized as either intrinsic or extrinsic in origin. As noted above, faculty participate in distance education because they derive a personal sense of satisfaction from doing so; that distance teaching can be rewarding is obvious. From an extrinsic point of view, however, is distance teaching rewarded? To answer this question, one has to look at the values and reward system of the institution: what does the institution value; what does it reward, and what is the relationship between the two? Wolcott (1997) studied the values-rewards relationship at four Carnegie I research institutions. She concluded that at these institutions distance education occupied a marginal status, was neither highly valued nor well rewarded, was not highly related to promotion and tenure decisions, and that faculty rewards depended on the commitment of the leader of the academic unit.

The most sought after reward among higher education faculty is that of achieving tenure and advancement in rank. Distance teaching typically has little influence in enhancing one's chances for promotion or tenure. If anything, distance teaching has a downside: as a time-consuming activity, it can divert faculty energies away from scholarly activities that are more highly valued and rewarded. This potentially negative aspect of participation in distance education can be detrimental

particularly for the junior faculty member working toward tenure. Wolcott's study (1997) underscores the important role the department head plays in guiding faculty and awarding appropriate credit for their efforts in distance education that support department and institutional goals.

How distance education figures in to the determination of other extrinsic rewards such as merit pay and salary increases represents a large gap in our understanding of faculty rewards. While Wolcott (1997) documented that participation in distance teaching can strengthen one's teaching record, little credit has been attributed to the creation of distance learning materials as a scholarly activity. The current proliferation of on-line courses calls attention to this as a looming issue.

Recognition

Recognition take several forms ranging from formal awards and informal acknowledgments. To be motivating, rewards do not have to be formal or structured; a little recognition can go a long way. Few institutions have been identified that offer an award for outstanding distance teaching. Administrators and faculty alike, however, have commented that small tokens or gestures such as certificates of appreciation, public praise or acknowledgment for time and effort expended, and peer recognition can be factors that enhance satisfaction and motivation (Wolcott, 1998). Faculty derive satisfaction from sharing in the recognition that distance education programs can bring to their departments.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

Perhaps no subject with respect to institutional support and rewards associated with distance education is currently of greater interest among faculty than the issue of intellectual property rights. Producing materials for distance and distributed learning raises questions of ownership. Few institutions have developed policies that adequately address copyright, royalties, and performance and distribution rights of materials produced for or as a consequence of distance learning courses. We can expect that the proliferation of electronic publishing, widespread online access to information, and the continuing debate about copyright and the new media to continue to in the forefront of faculty issues.

Conclusion

As indicated in the quotation that prefaces this paper, distance learning is a force for change in the higher education. Already we are seeing the influence of distributed learning technologies, in particular the Internet, in shaping the work of faculty. The convergence of technological change, the influence of economic and market forces on the university, and increasing public scrutiny of the academy focus attention on issues relating to work and reward among higher education faculty. Until recently, faculty issues in distance education have been neglected (Dillon & Walsh, 1992). But if listserv discussions and campus discourse are accurate indicators, institutions are beginning to wake to the issues as distance and distributed learning join the mainstream.

This paper has briefly outlined eight issues that are critical to the conversation about distance education and the institutional reward system. In closing, I offer the

following recommendations to guide policy development and reward practices. Institutions should work to:

1. Identify and provide a wider range of incentives that can lead to greater satisfaction and job performance among faculty involved in classroom innovations and outreach activities.
2. Reduce barriers, both real and perceived, that may hinder participation in activities that promote the values and goals of both the institution and the academic unit.
3. Create faculty development programs that provide incentives and rewards which appeal to intrinsic motives, accommodate different career paths, and match developmental stages of motivation.
4. Provide instructional support programs that provide:
   - training in the use and integration of new technologies and approaches to instruction,
   - mentoring of faculty new to distance education and teaching with technology,
   - technical support in using new and emerging information technologies,
   - assistance in the design of instruction and in the development and production of instructional materials.
5. Develop criteria to equitably determine flexible workloads and adequate compensation for outreach teaching and alternatives modes of instructional delivery.
6. Align rewards with institutional values and priorities so that rewards reflect role expectations, and faculty contributions to all facets of the institution's mission are valued and appropriately credited.
7. Establish copyright policies that accommodate changing patterns in information access and dissemination, and that protect both institutional interests and the intellectual property of faculty.

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